

GRASSHOPPER MAKER'S SONG

MUSIC BY DUŠAN BOGDANOVIĆ

Dušan Bogdanović recalls the moment he decided to become a classical musician, listening to Bach's Passacaglia in C Minor for organ. "I thought, well, this is really the summit," he says. "I felt that the incredible perfection, beauty, and expressiveness of that music was reason enough to dedicate my life to classical music."

But the Yugoslav-born musician didn't want to limit himself to interpreting the music of others, so he began to form his own path within the classical guitar world. Through a synthesis of composition, improvisation, scholarship, performance, and the integration of ethnic musical idioms, he has created a unique voice that has touched audi-

ences from eastern Europe to east Asia and inspired a growing number of prominent guitarists to record his compositions. The improvisation-based piece "Grasshopper Maker's Song," from his *Worlds* CD, typifies his adventurous approach to the classical guitar.

Bogdanović started his career at the age of 20, when he completed his studies in guitar and composition at the Geneva Conservatory. In the two years that followed, he took first prize at the International Guitar Competition in Geneva, began teaching at the Conservatory, and gave a successful debut at Carnegie Hall—an intense career as a traditional classical guitarist was in full swing. But hardly a year later, in the midst of this



Tuning: D A D G B E

Relaxed and flowing

♩ = 120

Sheet music for "Grasshopper Maker's Song" in D A D G B E tuning. The piece is marked "Relaxed and flowing" with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. The notation includes a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first system is labeled "A1" and the second system is labeled "(1/2 B II)". The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing triplets. The guitar part includes various techniques such as harmonics (H), slides (S), and bends (B). The piece concludes with a final chord in the key of D major.

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1/2 B IV.

27 28 29 30

slight bend

31 32 33 34

35 36 37 38

39 40 41 42

B 1/2 B I.

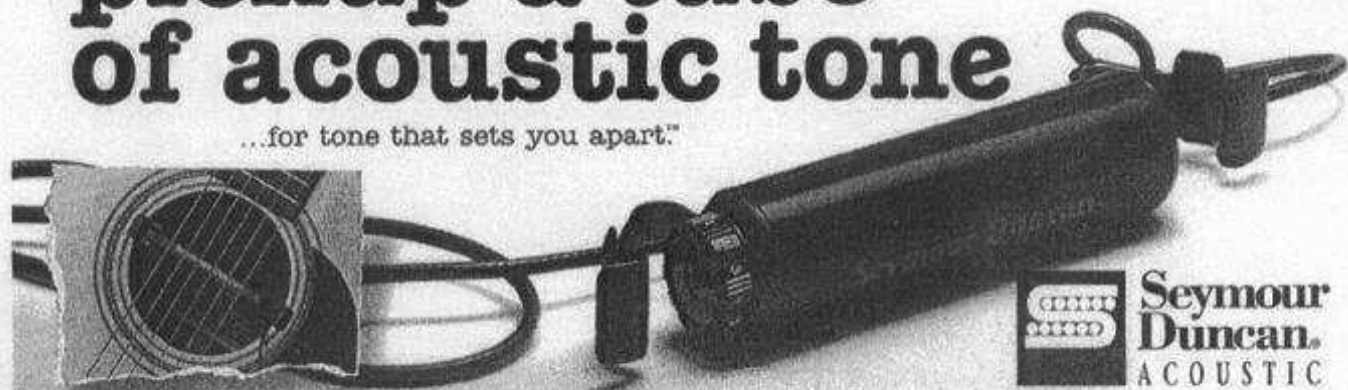
43 44 45 46

The image displays a musical score for guitar, consisting of three systems. The first system covers measures 49 to 52. Measure 49 is in 5/4 time and features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line with fret numbers (0, 10, 3, 3, 0, 4, 4, 2, 4, 4). Measure 50 is marked with a 'C' in a box and includes a 'Harm.' (harmonic) instruction. Measure 51 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'Harm.' instruction. Measure 52 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'ritard.' (ritardando) instruction. The second system shows measures 53 to 56. Measure 53 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'Harm.' instruction. Measure 54 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'Harm.' instruction. Measure 55 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'Harm.' instruction. Measure 56 is in 2/4 time and includes a 'Harm.' instruction. The third system is titled 'Modes for improvisation' and shows four measures of a scale in the treble clef and a corresponding bass line with fret numbers (0, 2, 4, 0, 2, 0, 1, 0, 2, 4, 1, 2, 0, 1, 0, 1, 4, 0, 2, 0, 1, 0, 1, 4, 0, 2, 3, 1).

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success, Bogdanović found himself in a difficult situation that forced him to rethink his artistic direction. The rigid demands of his concert schedule were not allowing him the space to develop his creativity, and the pressures of maintaining such a focused career at so young an age became unbearable.

"I felt like my life was so defined that I might as well die right now and it wouldn't make much difference," says Bogdanović. Equally disturbing was the realization that he had not even chosen this touring focus for himself. Until then, he had never seriously thought about what he wanted to accomplish with his

music, or the specific direction he wanted to take. Bogdanović could have continued down the secure, conventional path, but that way seemed a little too worn; so he chose another. "One day I just decided I was canceling all of my concerts," he recalls. "Then I just took a long, long break."

This decision to redirect his life was greatly misunderstood. "Well, it was a disaster, obviously," Bogdanović says of the cancellations. Concerts had been scheduled long in advance, and some of the promoters were angry at the young performer's audacity. Still, the break seemed to be just what the developing

artist needed. For the better part of three years, he practically gave up playing the guitar and lived as simply as he could, developing a reflective space where he could prioritize his interests and rediscover his motivations. "It was great for me because I could suddenly reevaluate all the decisions I had made," he says. "After that I really opened myself up to a much larger view of what it is to be a musician—and what it is to be a human being."

Of course the inspiration of Bach's Passacaglia stayed with him, so eventually Bogdanović began to rebuild his career. In the early '80s, he immigrated to the United States and settled in Los Angeles. He began teaching at the University of Southern California and touring as a member of the Falla Trio. Six years ago he moved north, joining the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he has been teaching ever since.

Although Bogdanović once again finds himself in the midst of a successful music career, he has been careful to make creativity and expression its focus. These days he allows plenty of space for experiments like his improvisatory collaborations with Miroslav Tadić, James Newton, and Milcho Leviev. He prefers to play his own compositions and rarely performs the standard repertoire. When he does play more traditional pieces, the results are highly imaginative, as in his work with Elaine Camparone on the *Bach with Pluck* CDs.

Bogdanović's music has been steadily gaining in popularity ever since his first pieces were published in 1980, and his compositions have been recorded by such internationally known guitarists as Eduardo Isaac, William Kanengiser, Andriano Sebastiani, the Newman-Oltman and Gruber-Makdar guitar duos, and the Asti Quartet. His *Six Illuminations for Piano* are being recorded and performed by Brazilian pianist Fabio Luz, and a commission from the Pacific Dance Company was the stimulus for "Crow," his "contemporary blues ballet-poem" based on the poetry of Ted Hughes. An interesting commission from Shirley Yamamoto of a work for flute, guitar, and Japanese koto also seems likely.

Bogdanović's compositional style blends a variety of ethnic idioms with conventional forms from the classical tradition. The irregular meters of Balkan music, the improvisational technique and harmonic language of jazz, Indian raga forms, African polyrhythms, mod-

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ern rock and soul, European art music, and the music of Brazil are just a few of the flavors that seep into his works. Specific examples of his particular kind of integration can be found in the way Indian raga influenced the forms for his two "Raguettes." A fascination with the complicated polyrhythms of west African music was the stimulus for his *Polyrhythmic and Polymetric Studies for Guitar and Seven Easier Polymetric Studies*. Polyrhythm has since been an important part of his technique, adding to an already sophisticated sense of rhythm inherited from his Balkan background.

Unlike most classical guitarists, Bogdanović has developed a refined style of improvisation based on the same musical languages and rhythmic diversity found in his notated compositions. He uses this spontaneous way of expressing himself in many of his recorded works, including "Grasshopper Maker's Song." The inspiration for the piece came from a chance meeting while on tour in the Orient. One day near a Hong Kong market, Bogdanović happened upon a peaceful-looking gentleman making grasshoppers out of straw. Bogdanović eventually learned that as a baby the grasshopper maker had been left in a garbage can to die. A group of Taoist monks found him, raised him, and taught him how to make the straw grasshoppers that would enable him to earn a living. "For nearly 40 years he has been going to that wall to make and sell his grasshoppers," Bogdanović says. "There's something very satisfying about that man and the power of focus and simplicity."

DISCOGRAPHY

DUŠAN BOGDANOVIĆ

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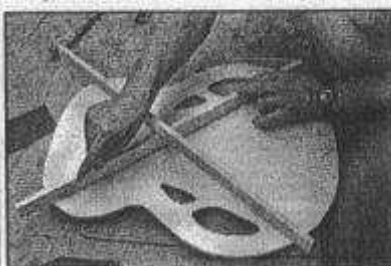


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